

# Rural Romance

*A Story of the Saskatchewan  
Farm Movement and its  
Objectives*

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It ain't the guns or armament, nor the funds that they  
can pay,  
But the close co-operation that makes them win the day;  
It ain't the individual, nor the army as a whole,  
But the everlastin' team work of every bloomin' soul!

— Kipling.

## UP AND BE DOING

I pray Thee call not this society;  
I asked for bread, Thou gavest me a stone;  
I am an hunger'd, and I find not one  
To give me meat, to joy or grieve with me;  
I find not here what I went out to see—  
Souls of true men, of women who can move  
The deeper, better part of us to love,  
Souls that can hold with mine communion free.

Alas! Must then these hopes, these longings high,  
This yearning of the Soul for *brotherhood*,  
And all that makes us pure, and wise, and good,  
Come broken hearted, home again to die?  
No, Hope is left, and prays with bended head,  
"Give us this day, O God, our daily bread!"

Great human nature, whither art thou fled?  
Are these things creeping forth and back again  
These hollow formalists and echoes, men?  
Art Thou entombed with the mighty dead?  
In God's name, No! not yet hath all been said,  
Or done, or longed for, that is truly great;  
These pitiful dried crusts will never sate  
Nature's for which pure Truth is daily bread.

We were not meant to plod along the earth,  
Strange to ourselves and to our fellows strange;  
We were not meant to struggle from our birth,  
To skulk and creep, and in mean pathways range;  
Act! with stern truth, large faith, and loving will!  
Up and be doing! God is with us still.

—James Russel Lowell.

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## PIONEER DAYS

SETTLERS came to Western Canada with the idea of developing farms and establishing homes on the wide open prairies or in the northern bush where formerly buffalo roamed and Indians had their hunting and camping grounds.

With high courage and deep resolve these fine men and women set out from old Ontario, the Maritimes, from across the United States border, from Great Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, Hungary, and the Ukraine.

Capital means they lacked, but grim determination to make good they had in large measure. The star of hope lit up the trail ahead and faith in the future of Saskatchewan held them steady to their course.

And when they filed their claims and commenced their homestead duties, they found that the eastern financier and the speculator—private enterprise—had followed them; not always with the idea of service, or lending a helping hand, but very often to pick off the plums anywhere within reach, and by every method of exploitation their grasping minds and will could conceive.

Credit was necessary to clear and break the land, and to build houses and barns, as the new settlers were without cash. Private loans were made at eight and nine, and up to fifteen per cent. interest, tying up the farmers by way of mortgages on their land and chattels. Farm machinery was sold on credit at ten per cent. over cash price; ten per cent. compound interest was charged, and twelve per cent. on overdue notes. But worse than that, the marketing of farm produce was in the hands of the organized Grain Trade who most certainly were not in business for the good of their health. Drovers skinned the farmers as well as their cattle. The private grain trade marketed the farmer's dearly won golden grain, and the grower was gypped on dockage, grade, weight and price.

### **THE SASKATCHEWAN GRAIN GROWERS' ASSOCIATION**

To protect their interests, and to keep themselves and their families on the land Saskatchewan farmers met together to discuss the necessity of a farm organization, and in the year 1901, at Indian Head, the Territorial Grain Growers' Association was born. Changing its name to the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association in 1905. Meetings were called in rural school houses, grain grower locals were formed and seeds of the co-operative movement were sown, this sowing to bear much fruit at the present time, in that Saskatchewan has the record of being the most co-operative-minded Province in the Dominion.

Farmers like Partridge of Sintaluta, Motherwell of Abernethy, Peter Dayman of Indian Head, John Maharg of Moose Jaw, Fred W. Green of Boharm,

came to the fore, and gave strong and sane leaderships in trying to find solutions to the farmers' mounting economic problems. Discussions took place as to the wisdom and necessity of farmers going into the grain handling business on a co-operative basis, resulting in the formation of the Grain Growers' Grain Company and later the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company.

Immediately applications poured into the head office for co-operative elevators at local shipping points. Farmers, at their own expense, canvassed their districts to sell the required number of shares to finance the construction—fifty-dollar shares with \$7.50 cash at time of application, and twenty shares limit to any one person. Soon hundreds of elevators were erected, which acted as very efficient silent policemen guarding the grain growers' interests and checking vicious exploitation.

## **LEGISLATIVE REFORMS**

From now on, annual grain grower conventions became the greatest event in the rural life of the Province. Two thousand farmer delegates meeting in convention proved no mean gathering, and these conventions became the farmers' parliament. High tribute has been paid to the work of the old grain growers. A member of the provincial legislature said recently, while speaking in the assembly, "I believe that practically every reform on these statute books has been obtained through the efforts of the Grain Growers' Association."

## **THE WOMEN GRAIN GROWERS**

Women grain growers have played their full part in striving for better rural conditions, and as the result of their united efforts we now have—The Dower Law, Old Age Pensions Act, Mothers' Allowances, Widows' Grants, Pensions for the Blind, Municipal Hospitals, Municipal Doctors, Visiting School Nurses, T. B. Sanatoriums, Free Cancer Clinics, Red Cross Outpost Hospitals, Schools for Deaf and Blind Persons.

The grain growers were instrumental in the establishment of Municipal Hail Insurance.

## **THE WHEAT BOARD**

The following wheat market records and price spreads

between grades and livestock price will indicate reason for the continuous unrest of farmers:

#### **F.O.B. Port Arthur-Fort William**

	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3
	Nor.	Nor.	Nor.
Jan. 11, 1913.....	83c	80c	77c
April 8, 1913.....	89	86½	83½
Dec. 18, 1913.....	81 5/8	79 5/8	77

	No. 4	No. 5	No. 6	Feed
	Nor.	Nor.	Nor.	
Jan. 11, 1913.....	72½c	66½c	60½c	51c
April 8, 1913.....	80½	75½	70	60
Dec. 18, 1913.....	73	66½	62½	56½

#### **F.O.B. Winnipeg**

#### **Choice Butcher Steers**

Jan. 11, 1913.....	\$5.50 to \$6.50 per 100 lbs.
April 8, 1913.....	\$6.25 to \$6.75 per 100 lbs.
Dec. 18, 1913.....	\$6.25 to \$6.75 per 100 lbs.

#### **Choice Hogs**

Jan. 11, 1913.....	\$8.25 per 100 lbs.
April 8, 1913.....	\$8.75 per 100 lbs.
Dec. 18, 1913.....	\$7.50 per 100 lbs.

When George E. Foster, federal minister of trade and commerce, commandeered the wheat crop during the first world war and fixed the price at \$1.30 a bushel, a grain grower delegation to Ottawa protested as inflation had started. "What price do you want?" asked Mr. Foster. "Nothing less than \$2.00 a bushel at local shipping points," was the reply. The price of wheat was fixed at \$2.21 F.O.B. terminals, and Saskatchewan farmers were saved \$200,000,000 in one year. In 1918 the Wheat Board was established at the request of the organized farmers; also amendments were secured to the regulations of the Board of Grain Commissioners, which abolished the mixing of grain, ordered held by farmers in private elevators.

"The Western Producer," a reliable weekly for progressive news, with its unique "Open Forum," a vital necessity, and of the utmost value in the forward development of a "free press," owes its inception to the organized farmers' movement.

The Saskatchewan Federated Co-operatives, having an annual turnover of over \$9,500,000, started as the Trading Department of the United Farmers.

### **POOLING DEVELOPMENT**

In 1920 the Wheat Board ceased to function and wheat was marketed on the open market through the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. In two years on the competitive market, wheat dropped \$1.56 a bushel, and Saskatchewan farmers' saw red. Joe Thompson and Harry Schwarz of Ituna, and L. P. MacNamee of Kelvington, organized a left wing group, and called themselves "The Farmers' Union." Their objective being to prevent wide fluctuations in farm prices, by pooling all farm produce and distributing same to consumer on a non-profit basis. Aaron Sapiro, an authority on pooling in the United States, was invited to come to Saskatchewan to sell the pooling idea to farmers. He was a persuasive orator and was eminently successful. As a first step in the development of pooling the chain of co-operative elevators was absorbed by "The Saskatchewan Wheat Producers Limited," \$11,000,000 being paid for the equity. The co-op. shareholders receiving a handsome dividend on their original \$7.50 investment, thanks to the vision and loyalty of those early pioneers of the organized farm movement. Western Canada can now rightly take pride in the fact that our "Wheat Pool" is the largest co-operative grain-handling concern in the world.

Following up the pooling idea, efforts were made to sell our western wheat on the British market at parity prices. The open competitive market resented this, and Argentina threw its wheat on the market and undersold the Pool, resulting in chaotic marketing.

### **AMALGAMATION**

Saskatchewan farmers now saw the lack of wisdom in supporting two rival farm organizations, so in 1926 delegates from the S.G.G.A. and the Farmers' Union met and negotiated to amalgamate, which was finally consummated at Moose Jaw in 1927 under the name of the United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan Section, with the final objective of similar groups being organized in every province of the Dominion.

## **THE UNITED FARMERS OF CANADA** **(Saskatchewan Section Ltd.)**

With its central office in Saskatoon the U.F.C. has been constantly fighting the farmer's battle—day in and day out—for justice and equity. Non-political, non-commercial, and non-sectarian. It has a very definite place to fill in the economic life of the Province; first, as an objective organization; and secondly, as a pressure group when necessary. Without fear or favor, through its legislative committee, it meets with the cabinets of the Provincial House, or the Federal Government, and places the requests or demands of its members before the proper authorities. If these presentations do not get results, to the satisfaction of our executive, pressure will be brought to bear by delegation or direct action to enforce our demands. An action program was drawn up by the U.F.C. and A.F.U. whereby we agreed to take joint action on farm policy when the occasion warranted such action.

### **PARITY OF INCOME**

Our ultimate objective policy is Parity of Income for farmers. We are one-third of the population and receive one-sixth of the national income. The higher the farm income is the more prosperity there is for every citizen in Canada. It has been proved by Lord Beveridge that the last four depressions have been caused by the decline in agricultural prices, so that it is imperative that an equitable and stable income for farmers be maintained.

### **THE 1946 FARM STRIKE**

The 1946 farm strike voted on and called by the Alberta Farmers' Union and supported by the U.F.C., was direct action to bring pressure to bear on our Dominion Government, to set up a Fact-finding Board, composed of farmer-member organizations, labor, business, and government, to determine "Parity" and then establish parity prices for all farm products.

The "hungry thirties" are still fresh in the minds of older farmers when a depression following the 1929 boom caused the bottom to fall out of the prices of farm products, wheat tobogganed from \$1.00 a bushel to twenty cents; good cattle sold for one and one-half cents a pound; hogs were down to one and three-



quarter cents a pound; eggs were sold four and five cents a dozen; cream was bought by the creameries for twelve cents a pound butterfat; dairy butter sold for five cents a pound; and farmers were earning two cents an hour milking the cows; oats were sold for eight cents a bushel, and barley for five cents.

Remembering this catyclysm farmers demanded a stabilization policy at parity levels, and adopted a holding policy to show the Government their determination to resist any attempt to lower the basic price of wheat or other farm products. The Federal Minister of Agriculture, after four weeks' strike, agreed to meet a second delegation of the striking Unions to consider the strike brief.

## **AGITATE—ORGANIZE—EDUCATE**

**"Agitation":** Our farm movement is something more than a demand for material gain. It is an ethical movement of the rank and file to lift the farmer up out of his present position of economic slavery—the worst victim of the exploiting capitalistic profit system—to his true place in a new world order of greater social equality.

We "agitate" to awaken the farmer to a true sense of his own destiny, as a partner in the greatest industry in the world. Without the farming industry the world would quickly perish of starvation. Without farmers the towns and cities of Saskatchewan would cease to exist and so we "agitate" to bring these facts before our governments, and demand that our industry of agriculture be placed on a level with all other industries, and stabilization of farm income be assured.

**"Organization":** Every group in the world practically, is organized in self interest, so, to keep our rightful place in the economic world farmers must organize. Alone a farmer is impotent. He may have a grievance, but his complaint is unheeded. Numbers can win out where the individual fails, and victory is always to the largest battalions. A hundred thousand farmers speaking with one voice commands attention. Organized effort in all walks of life get results. Co-operative effort is a part of the law of life. Competition is death. Co-ordinated action has power and prestige.

**"Education":** Ignorance of economic inequality is the farmers' greatest enemy. Fear is built up by ignorance. Fear has to be dispelled before we can think and act progressively. When we know, we will do. Nothing can keep us from our true destiny, when once we know what is coming to us, and work to get it.

As farmers, let us educate ourselves to think out and understand our common farm problems, and then agitate, and organize, to overcome our handicaps. After forty years of farm organization activity, there are still many farm problems awaiting solution.

Monetary reform—to make money our servant—electrification, all-over crop insurance, international food agreements, equitable freight rates, co-operative development, including co-operative farms, removal of customs tariff, old age security, better highways and market roads, protection and better utilization of our forests, extension of railroad communication and roads, and development of mining and industry in the north, extension of northern boundary to take in the northwest territories, and the fullest development of the Hudson Bay route, etc., etc.

Use your local lodge as a winter study group, debate these, and other subjects. Keep yourself well informed on the issues of the day. Extend your farm forum group into a U.F.C. local lodge, so that the decisions you arrive at may be passed on to your central office and to your district and main conventions. Get a clear understanding of your farm policy as laid down by your annual convention. Then loyally support your Farm Union as a militant body, fighting for a square deal for agriculture. Hitch your wagon to a star, and follow the gleam.

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Let us then be UP and doing,  
With a heart for any fate.  
Still achieving, still persuing.  
Learn to labor and to wait.

—Longfellow.

## **A VIKING'S CALL**

Organize friends—Farmers,  
We shall not suffer wreck.  
If courage, grit and manhood  
Are captains on our deck.  
Sail on, deep freighter  
With blessing and with hope.  
The power of right with mighty hands  
Is pulling at the ropes.  
Sail on, for truth and right,  
Strength is in your sails:  
There's victory in sight.  
Behind us, Big Business  
Will bully, curse and frown.  
Before us unborn ages  
Shall accept our splendid crown.  
Speed on, our work is holy;  
Truth's message never fails.  
Sweep on, through storm and darkness deep,  
Through thunder and through hail.  
Toil on, the morning comes;  
The port we yet shall win,  
And every Canadian farmer  
Shall shout  
Equality is in.

—John Seim, Halvorgate, Sask.,  
October 25th, 1946.

If you think you are beaten, you are;  
If you think you dare not, you don't;  
If you'd like to win, but you think you can't  
It's almost a cinch you won't;  
If you think you'll lose, you're lost,  
For out in the world you'll find  
Victory begins with a fellow's will—  
It's all in the state of mind.

Full many a race is lost  
Ere even a race is run,  
And many a coward fails  
Ere even his work's begun.  
Think big, and your deeds will grow,  
Think small and you fall behind,  
Think that you can, and you will;  
It's all in the state of mind.